

# How to Educate Competent Translators

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## Abstract

The present study aims to elaborate on **Translator Education** via adopting the **Social Constructivist Approach** and the **PACTE model of translation competence**. According to this approach, students actively take part in the acquisition of different components of translation competence through collaboration with other students. They need to acquire translation-related competencies through a 4-year study program. The researcher and the scientific committee in Cihan University-Erbil developed **an Undergraduate Translator Training Program** which encompasses an up-to-date curriculum and a detailed syllabus design, and serve the professionalization of translation trainees. As **educating expert translators requires much more than teaching a foreign language**, the program equips the students with **bilingual, extra-linguistic, theoretical, instrumental, strategic, and psycho-physiological knowledge**.

# A Gap in Translator Education

The ultimate goal of a translator training program is **to instruct well-educated, and expert translators and interpreters.**

However, according to Krings (1986/1988)

- **Professionals use holistic strategies** involving the text as a whole, whereas **students follow the linear strategies** involving small translation units (e.g., words),
- **Professionals activate their general knowledge and focus on the sense of a text,** whereas **learners concentrate on formal elements,**
- **Professionals work more efficiently by applying conscious strategies** and they have more **self confidence and curiosity and a greater sense of responsibility.**

According to Pym(2009), Professionals, unlike trainees, ....

- 1) use **more paraphrase and less literalism** as coping strategies,
- 2) process **larger translation units**,
- 3) make **fewer changes when reviewing**,
- 4) spend **more time looking at the target text** than at the source text,
- 5) use **top-down processing** and refer **more to the translation purpose**,
- 6) rely more on **encyclopedic knowledge**,
- 7) express more **personal theories**,
- 8) incorporate the client into **the risk-management processes**,
- 9) shift **between automatized routine tasks and conscious problem-solving**, and
- 10) display **more realism, confidence and critical attitudes** in their decision-making.

# Translation Competence

Wilss (1976), Bell (1991), Pym (1992), Kiraly (1995), Hurtado Albir (1996, 1999), Hansen (1997), Risku (1998), Neubert (2000), Kelly (2005).

These studies attempted to introduce components of translation competence, without validating their claims from an empirical-experimental perspective (PACTE Group, 2011, p. 4).

# The PACTE Model of Translation Competence (2003)

The PACTE group (**Process of Acquisition of Translation Competence and Evaluation**) carried out holistic, empirical-experimental researches **on translation competence and its acquisition in written translation** in different languages like English, French and German - Spanish and Catalan (2002, 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2009, 2011).

**Translation competence: the underlying system of knowledge required to translate.**

1. **Bilingual sub-competence: Knowledge required to communicate in two languages** (pragmatic, socio-linguistic, textual, grammatical and lexical knowledge).

**2. Extra-linguistic sub-competence:** General world knowledge, domain-specific knowledge, bicultural and encyclopedic knowledge.

**3. Knowledge about translation:** Knowledge about translation theories and aspects of the profession.

**4. Instrumental sub-competence:** Knowledge of using documentation resources and information and communication technologies applied to translation (dictionaries of all kinds, encyclopedias, grammars, style books, parallel texts, electronic corpora, search engines, etc.).

## 5. Strategic sub-competence: Knowledge ...

- to guarantee the efficiency of the translation process and solve problems encountered, ....
- to control the translation process,
- to plan the process and carry out the translation project (e.g., via selecting the most appropriate method),
- to evaluate the process and the partial results obtained in relation to the final purpose,
- to activate the different sub-competences and compensate for any shortcomings,
- to identify translation problems and apply procedures to solve them.

6. Psycho-physiological components: Cognitive components (memory, perception, attention and emotion) and attitudinal aspects (intellectual curiosity, perseverance, rigor, the ability to think critically, etc.), and abilities (creativity, logical reasoning, analysis and synthesis, etc.)

## Social Constructivist Approach vs. Objectivist Approach

**Objectivist (transmissionist) Approach:** The conventional and teacher-centered class, a didactic event in translator training programs.

**Constructivist (transformationist) Approach:** Students' empowerment and their centralization let them control their own learning process (Rorty, 1979).

Transmission perspective	Transformation perspective
Knowledge is transformed	Knowledge is constructed
Learner is a student and client	Learner is a whole person
Teacher-centered	Students-centered
Motivation is extrinsic	Motivation is intrinsic
Learning is individual	Learning is social
Knowledge is content	Knowledge is a process

# Teachers` role ....

1. to let students take part in the syllabus design,
2. to encourage them to form groups and distribute roles,
3. to model strategy use and strategy creation,
4. to help them create and use their own dynamic strategies in translation practice,
5. to provide students with opportunities for interacting with peers and experts to collectively construct the wide expert and professional knowledge of translation,
6. to provide students with authentic translation situations,
7. to scaffold in order to assist learners in the collaborative construction of their mental models.

## **Students acquire translation competence via .....**

- 1. Adopting multiple realities and perspectives**
- 2. Collaborative and cooperative learning** (Peers and teachers working together collaboratively are simultaneously creating meaning among themselves),
- 3. Taking different roles in groups they join** (e.g., Organizer, Secretary, Assimilator/Mediator, Devil advocate, Entertainer)
- 4. Internalizing** knowledge individually,
- 5. Learning in the Zone of Proximal Development** (ZPD, a Virtual domain of the students` potential growth, in which learning occurs),
- 6. Authentic learning** (Ordinary practices of the culture)

# **The Application of SCA and PACTE model**

The researcher and the members of the scientific committee in Cihan University-Erbil designed [The Undergraduate Translator Training Program](#) whose final goal is to facilitate the development of the cited translation competencies by translation trainees.

**Discussion and Comments are Welcome!**